International Student Wellbeing and the Influence of Politics

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International Student Wellbeing in Higher Education and the Influence of Politics

As the geopolitical landscapes of the world develop and change, the very fabrics of social societies are consequently shaped and reshaped. Whether on a macro or micro scale, the decision-making process executed by governments (politics) ultimately dictates how societies should operate, and therefore directly influences the lives of nearly every single human being in one way or another. Although the reach of political directives may seem conceptually obvious when considering the influence and authority of policy and laws on societal functioning, the effects of political developments on individual lives are extremely multifaceted and complex. Arguably, due to the intricacies of the relationship between civilian life experiences and geopolitics, developments in and between governments often stimulate chain-reactions that extend far beyond that which may have been anticipated. Further, the connections between a region's political climate and the nature of other domains fundamental to the functioning of society (e.g., the economy, healthcare, education) are well documented (e.g., Benjamin, 2008; Hui & Want, 2003; Rousseau, 2016), as is the influence geopolitics can have on civilian mental-health and wellbeing (e.g., Bache & Scott, 2018; Doran & Hodgett, 2018).

As one begins to closely investigate the links between geopolitical developments and civilian wellbeing, one cohort is evidently highlighted as particularly susceptible to experiencing negative effects: international students (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010). For the purpose of this chapter, *wellbeing* refers to the psychological level of wellness, or positive mental-health, of an individual. A majority of international student studies of various generations (e.g., Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003; Oberg, 2006), geographical domains (e.g., Gomes, Berry, Alzougool, & Chang, 2014; Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015), and population dynamics (e.g., Brown & Brown, 2013; Lin, Peng, Kim, Kim, & Larose, 2011) support the notion that those in this cohort

are often the foremost victims of political strife. Considering the significant number of international students – a number that is only expected to rise – the wellbeing concerns of this cohort are increasingly in need of acknowledgement. A recent report released by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO; 2009) highlights the extent to which this true, by predicting the international student population will reach an all-time high of seven million by the year 2020. Considering the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada together host nearly half of all internationally mobile students (UNESCO, 2017), the politics within and outwith these four 'major destinations' are of utmost concern. Also, due to recent geopolitical developments, which will be explored in this chapter, these major destinations are currently experiencing instability in their international student economy.

In terms of where students are mobilizing from, according to UNESCO data (2017) majority of the current 5 million international students originally migrate from Asia (e.g., China, Pakistan, India), with students from the Middle East and North-Africa (MENA) serving as the fastest growing outwardly mobile cohort. As education becomes increasingly more globalized, international student experiences become more deeply influenced by the political developments of not only their home-countries, but also of their host-nations. This chapter will explore how political developments in home and host nations often influence international student experiences in ways which directly effects students' wellbeing. Consideration will also be given to the influence of economic changes and technological advancements.

Understanding the Politics of International Student Wellbeing

The wellbeing needs of international students are extremely complex, yet conceptually evident. Research on this cohort has been extensive, in terms of utilizing their unique cohort

dynamics to explore transcultural and transnational concepts such as culture shock, culture learning theory, and acculturative stress. In terms of investigation regarding the wellbeing and positive mental health of this cohort, only modern research has truly begun to investigate the needs, stressors, and coping mechanisms that affect this population for the sole purpose of providing resources to support these students. The need for such investigation has become increasingly apparent over the last three decades, with the rapid development of globalization facilitated by novel technological advancements. The introduction of the internet, world wide web and social media has incontrovertibly had an influence on transitional experiences, and has possibly reshaped the nature of international student sojourns. For example, the prime concern for academics, researchers, educators, and mental-health professionals with an interest in the domain of international student wellbeing, has typically been to not only identify the most common and intense stressors, but also to provide coping resources by which international students can then manage their stress. In this pursuit, the literature has come to reflect that, in addition to academic stressors (e.g., maintaining good grades, finishing assignments, graduating on time), international students often face a disproportionately high level of stress across three core domains: transitional, social, and life stress. The subsequent discussion will systematically address the influence of geopolitics, technology, and economic trends, on international student wellbeing in each of these domains; with a special emphasis on the MENA region, as this region harbours the fast growing outwardly mobile student population.

Transitional Stress: Adjustment and Rejection

It has been well established in the literature that international students often experience great anxiety and distress during their initial immersion in novel cultural environments (i.e.,Berry, 2006; Louie, 2002; Presbitero, 2016). The mechanisms by which this distress is

facilitated is often rooted in a dissonance and discomfort experienced by immersing oneself in an unfamiliar sociocultural environment, which may result in experiencing 'culture shock'. Despite having many definitions and conceptualizations, a literature review conducted by Furnham (2010) lead to a broad definition of *culture shock* as, "a disorienting experience of suddenly finding that the perspectives, behaviours, and experience of an individual group, or whole society are not shared by others" (p. 88). Although culture shock is a prominent issue for those concerned with international student wellbeing, recent studies suggest the prevalence and nature of this experience has changed since its initial conceptualization. For example, a recent study conducted by Lefdahl-Davis and Perroe-McGovern (2015), which explored the transcultural experiences of Saudi international students (a MENA population) studying in the United States, found few experiences of culture shock amongst the group. Most interestingly, the researchers largely attributed the absence of culture shock experiences to the participants having been familiar with American culture previous to their arrival, due to exposure facilitated through modern technology. That is, the participants reported having previously engaged with American culture via television programs, Hollywood movies, and music; and further via social media platforms which allow transnational content sharing between users (e.g., Youtube, Reddit, Facebook).

However, the pre-exposure that is being facilitated through the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) also suggests that, while prospective student sojourners may be able to acquire knowledge and familiarity with the generic features of a host culture (e.g., language, weather, cuisine), this cohort may not necessarily be able to prepare themselves for the more negative features of their host society. For example, a similar study conducted by Belford (2017) explored the cross-cultural transitions of Asian and European international students in

Australia with similar results, reporting low levels of culture shock specifically, but making reference to the difficulties of the transition in other domains (e.g., living independently, having to work, managing studies). Of particular interest, is the mutual reference in both studies to the role experiences of discrimination by host locals played as barriers to maintaining positive-mental health across both samples. In fact, experiences of real or perceived discrimination, are a particularly significant contributor to international student stress and is often the most difficult to cope with (i.e., Chai, Krägeloh, Shepherd, & Billington, 2012; Oropeza, Fitzgibbon, & Baron, 1991; Presbitero, 2016; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). The relationship between societal perspectives towards minorities, and the ability for micro and macro politics to shape these perspectives in host nations is worthy to note, as the ease with which political actors can encourage discriminatory attitudes within a society is well established (e.g., Bhui, 2016; Heald, Vida, & Bhugra, 2018; Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013). This concept will be explored in greater depth in the subsequent section.

Social Stress: Support Networks and Identity

It is well established in the psychology literature across many fields (social, clinical, educational, etc.) that social support networks are fundamental moderators of stress (i.e., Berry, 2006; Misra et al., 2003; Oropeza et al., 1991)**.** Thus, another important domain of international student wellbeing management is that which is concerned with the quality and quantity of social interactions between the student and others, both in home and host contexts. For example, an investigation and theoretical model by Misra, Crist and Burant (2003) found that social support has ‘buffering’ effects on stress symptoms for international graduate students. In particular, contact with one’s own culture had the greatest effect (e.g., speaking one’s own language, communicating with friends and family in their home country), although interactions with locals

(i.e., local friends) was also beneficial. The notion that social support can act as a 'powerful resource' for international students in terms of stress management extends far beyond this particular study, and is highlighted as a vital coping resource for international students of various backgrounds, fields, and academic levels (e.g., Belford, 2017; Chai et al., 2012; Li & Chen, 2014). However, political developments often have a direct effect on the extent to which international students are able to utilize and manage their social support networks, both in host and home countries.

Firstly, international students are often regarded as 'cultural ambassadors' of their home-countries and cultures by those they encounter in their host environments (i.e., L. Brown, Brown, & Richards, 2014, p. 55; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2005, p. 153). This feature of stereotyping by host locals has been to be particularly problematic for international students attempting to build social networks in host environments, as this 'foreign ambassador' designation, a mechanisms of stereotyping, often results in the facilitation of hyper-nationalism in both the addressors (locals) and addressees (international students). For example, an investigation conducted by Brown, Brown and Richards (2014), which investigated the relationship between the British media representations of Islam and the experiences of Muslim international students, emphasizes the extent to which this is true with their findings. Their study found locals often regarded the Muslim international students as objects of suspicion and caution, and where there was interaction, the students were often asked intrusive and negatively assumptive questions. Every participant reported having to explain themselves, the reason for their beliefs, and even the political dynamics of their home-countries (e.g., if women are legally allowed to drive, legal requirements around religious dress, etc.). Brown and colleagues (2014) also reported the students' constant pressure to distinguish Islam from terrorism, and emphasize the beliefs of

Islam do not justify the heinous crimes against humanity often linked to Islam by the media. In this way, the influence of macro political attitudes is exemplified as having an influence on local level social life, by establishing a foundational knowledge within a society of people, about another society of people, laden with bias, presumption, and stereotypes to serve the greatest and oldest political motivation: the preservation and protection of that which is familiar and 'ours' (i.e., the values, beliefs, and norms of the locals).

Further, when considering the role of social support networks in wellbeing preservation for international students, it is imperative to consider the extent to which these sojourners can engage with their previously established networks. Family and friends in home-countries are widely recognized in both the psychology and international student literatures as vital social support resources (e.g., Lin, Peng, Kim, Kim, & Larose, 2011; Yazdani, Zadeh, & Shafi, 2016; Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008). However, for most international students, the only way to maintain contact with home-contacts is through the use of modern communication technologies (e.g., Skype, Viber, Whatsapp) and social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter). Though modern research has demonstrated that the use of such platforms to maintain connections with social contacts is often adequate (e.g., Chen & Ross, 2015; Park, Song, & Min Lee, 2014), especially for those which allow virtual face-to-face interactions (i.e., video-messaging; e.g., Skype, FaceTime, Google-Hangouts), political developments often create barrier to doing so for particular groups of international students. For example, on the one hand, due to censorship regulations, such as those which are well known in nations such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, China, Pakistan, and Vietnam, many international students may experience difficulty in maintaining contact with remote loved ones. On the other hand, international students and their families from regions which may not necessarily be subject to censorship impositions, but

experience periods of political tension, often must navigate communications around intentional disruptions of access to social media platforms facilitated by governmental forces, or 'media blackouts'. For example, during the 2016 attempted military coup in Turkey, reports emerged that access to over 130 social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube had been blocked within the nation (BBC News, 2016; Vanian, 2016; Wong, 2016). However, despite the blackout in Turkey, media outlets around the globe continued to publish developing stories with headlines such as *'Death toll rises to 265 in failed Turkey coup'* (Yackley & Tattersall, 2016), keeping Turkish international students in an emotional limbo. That is to say, during this time, Turkish international students in countries which did not impose internet censorship were able to access enough information about the civil unrest and military resistance during the attempted coup to be informed, but seemingly could not communicate with members of their family and friends in their home-country (due to the media blackout). Although this may be an extreme example of the influential relationship political developments can have on social support networks, the example serves to highlight the impact modern politics can have on even the most concrete (low-level) social functioning. Thus, if international students are not able to utilize and engage with their social support networks, a vital coping mechanism, this cohort will be particularly susceptible to experiencing poor mental health and wellbeing.

Moreover, as previously touched upon, international students are particularly at-risk of experiencing discrimination and isolation within their social host environments. In fact, the alienation and social mistreatment of international students is well documented in the literature, and is often regarded as the foremost contributor of stress for those who endure such experiences (e.g.,Abunab, Dator, Salvador, & Lacanaria, 2017; Berry, 2006; Ward et al., 2005) . As international students are often minorities in host environments, the out-grouping by host locals

is an unfortunate reality of transnational and transcultural experience, as outgroup/ingroup dynamics historically foster conflict. However, it is worthy to note the apparent and identified links between societal attitudes which facilitate discriminatory perspectives and the political developments within the related geopolitical landscape. To further explain, Bhui (2016) argues the relationship between political developments and social divisions is direct, with the former implementing and creating a foundation for the latter. To illustrate this point, Bhui (2016) makes the case that, following the British public's vote to leave the European Union held on the 23 June 2016 (Brexit referendum), stigma, prejudice and discrimination rates have risen against migrants, non-UK citizens, and religious and ethnic minorities within Britain. While Bhui's (2016) report does not explicitly discuss the influence such political developments will have on international students specifically, the literature clearly demonstrates a high vulnerability within this cohort to experience discrimination, and concurrently, reports such as Bhui's (2016) make the case that these such occurrences are on the rise. Thus, the possible relationship between political developments and international student wellbeing in social domains is illustrated by connecting the metaphorical dots between the experiences these sojourners live, and the influential forces which shape these experiences.

Life Stress: Finances, Family, and Emotional Upset

In addition to transitional and social stress, international students often have to deal with an entirely unique plethora of, what is commonly referred to as, *life stress*. This category of stress is broad, and is generally concerned with those contributors of stress which are predictable, common, and not often psychologically problematic; as well as encompassing idiosyncratic issues (Leong & Tolliver, 2008; Misra et al., 2003; Oropeza et al., 1991). For this particular cohort, that is international students, the biggest contributors of life stress are often financial,

family-oriented, related to the feeling of undesirable emotions, or a combination of the three (i.e., Furnham, 2010; Oropeza et al., 1991; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). Politics in home and host play central roles in the perpetuation of most of these stressors, and where they do, the political developments are often significant.

Financial Stress. The psychological tension and anxiety in this domain is greatly conceptually comprehensible: International students have many expenses. In addition to having to pay international student fees, which are often double or tripe that of home fees (in countries where home fees exist), the students in this cohort also often have to pay for medical insurance, visa applications, passports, and living costs. Another domain worthy to acknowledge is that of currency conversion. For students pursuing studies in nations which harbour economies stronger than that of their own host nations, the financial pressure is much greater than that of their peers. Where economics trends of home nations are unpredictable, or experience a 'crash' (great decline in value) during studies, the stress inflicted in this domain is of utmost concern. The economic crash of the Turkish lira in July of 2018 exemplifies the extent to which this is true, as the currency reached an all-time record low, falling dramatically within hours (Collinson & Davies, 2018; Heeb, 2018; Meyer, 2018). Considering Turkey is recognized as one of the top fifteen major contributors of international students, with most of its outward mobility to the United States, Europe, and United Kingdom (UNESCO, 2017), Turkish internationals undeniably felt the effects of this crash against the American Dollar, Euro, and British Pound.

As a major aim of this chapter is to highlight the relationships between international student wellbeing and the influence of political developments, the example herby presented, of the devalued lira, is of special interest. To further explain, the case has been made thus far concerning the likely influence of the crashing currency on international student wellbeing, as

the devaluation of one's finances in stronger economies can act as a major instigator of stress and therefore jeopardize one's wellbeing. As previously discussed, the links between the political developments concerning a nation, or nation's government, and other domains of societal function (e.g., the economy) are well established (e.g., Benjamin, 2008; Hui & Want, 2003; Rousseau, 2016) – and the case of the crashing lira is not likely an exception. To further explain, many sources attribute the crash of the Turkish lira to a poor relationship between the international actors Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and United Stated President Donald Trump (e.g., Collinson & Davies, 2018; Heeb, 2018; Meyer, 2018). Although the details of the tremulous relationship remain unclear, it is likely that developments which preceded the crash between the two state actors had some level of influence on the occurrence. In this way, it is evident that macro level politics have yet another mechanism (economics) by which to negatively influence the wellbeing of international students on a micro-level.

Familial Stress and Emotional Upset. Though international students often sojourn away from their families, the strong emotional bonds individuals may harbour towards their loved ones can transcend even the furthest of sojourns. With this in mind, it is common for international students to remain invested in familial developments in their home country, which both acts as a stressor and coping mechanism depending on the nature of the development (e.g., Allen, et al., 2012; Oropeza et al., 1991; Yazdani et al., 2016). The extent to which emotional ties can act as a stressor to international student mental health will be explored in greater depth in the subsequent section. However, it is necessary to establish that international students are also prone to experiencing significant emotional upset (homesickness, guilt, depression), often in relation to being away from their families, friends, and home environment. For instance, a seminal piece on acculturative stress amongst international students suggests *homesickness* is a major stressor in

this cohort (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994, p. 444). This notion is further exemplified by work conducted by Ward and colleagues (2005) which states homesickness is a nostalgic orientation which is explicitly related to elevated levels of depression (p. 233). Though this is merely one example of emotional distress in international students, the poor mental health and emotional upset are well established features of international student experiences (e.g., Chai et al., 2012; Gardner, Krägeloh, & Henning, 2014; Oropeza et al., 1991).

Conflicts in Context

Overall, it is evident macro and micro level political developments occurring in host environments and home countries, during the time of educational sojourns, often greatly influence the wellbeing status of international students. Further conceptualization on the influence of political developments in home and host on this subject matter is subsequently provided.

Major Contributors: Political Development in Home-Countries

The psychological wellbeing of globally mobile students has long been of great concern in both the psychology literature, and the international student literature. Since the 1950s, this cohort has been recognized as a population under great duress with a severe lack of resources, and is even considered to be experiencing a ‘mental-health crisis’ (i.e., Furnham, 2010; Oropeza et al., 1991; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2005). As previously explored, political climates in home and host countries can, to a great extent, contribute to international student stress. However, modern research has only just begun to investigate the experiences of students who sojourn form nations experiencing active political conflict. While there is very little empirical research contribution which explicitly conceptualizes or investigates the experiences of international students during times of political conflict, researchers have previously speculated

that international students exposed to home-country conflict not only expend time and energy to follow the political developments in their homes, but are also therefore prone to experiencing greater stress and hardship during their sojourn (i.e., Brown & Brown, 2013; Furnham, 2010; Ward et al., 2005). Further, there are significant contributions which investigate peripherally related themes (e.g., personal crisis, international student stress, traumatic stress, etc.), although it should be noted, these investigations merely grant fragmented insight in to the features of this greater experience.

Research concerning traumatic stress is particularly fundamental to understanding the experiences of international students who are away from home during times of political conflict. Emotional ties to people and places affected by the conflict may contribute further stress unto this cohort (i.e., Yazdani, Zadeh, & Shafi, 2016), considering the probability of traumatic-experiences (e.g., loss, death, threat to life) amongst this cohort are greatly increased when compared to sojourners of non-conflict nations. For example, a recent study conducted by Yazdani, Zadeh and Shafi (2016) investigated the extent to which one's physical and emotional proximity to a traumatic event can act as a predictor of trauma-related symptoms in adolescents. In the context of the study, emotional proximity refers to 'a close relationship with the victims of a traumatic stressor' (p.3), while physical proximity in research ' refers to the physical distance from the event [and/or] witnessing injury or death' (p. 2). It is important to note, all participants in this study were not physically present at the time the traumatic event occurred, but may have lived in or frequently visited the general area. Overall, the researchers found both physical *and* emotional proximity to a traumatic event can present particularly problematic trauma-related stress symptoms, and especially where there is a closer relationship to the victim. Based on these findings, Yazdani and colleagues (2016) argue individuals can be indirectly affected by troubling

events which happens to loved ones, such as family or friends, even if the individual is physically safe and removed from the traumatic environment themselves. Findings such as these highlight the need for acknowledgement concerning the emotional and psychological needs of international sojourners, especially those travelling from politically tense regions (e.g., Syria, Palestine, South Sudan). Further emphasizing this notion, experiences such as loss, or the death of loved ones have been highlighted in the literature as especially difficult to cope with when abroad (Oropeza et al., 1991).

Transnational ties to home-countries are therefore too important to be dismissed, and if overlooked, may continue to perpetuate significantly negative mental-health symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and helplessness. An investigation of Hattian-American reactions to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti also demonstrates the extent to which this is true, as the researchers reported a significant difference in psychological impact between those with more connections to Haiti (e.g., family, friends in Haiti) when compared to those with less or none (Allen et al., 2012). Allen and colleagues (2012) further advocate for the need to address the experiences and mental-health needs of those who harbour transnational ties to people and places experiencing ‘disaster’, suggesting that these individuals are, themselves, indirectly exposed to these traumas. However, it is worthy to note ‘man-made crises’ are often found to be more stressful and traumatic when compared to other disasters (e.g., natural), and therefore further emphasize the detrimental effects political developments can have on individual wellbeing for those involved, even remotely (Yazdani et al., 2016, p. 7)

Major Destinations: Political Developments in Host-Countries

The political climate of host nations can, to a great extent, determine and shape the nature of international student experiences for inwardly mobile sojourners. It is well documented that

the wellbeing of international students is explicitly linked to the nature of their cultural and societal acclimation experiences (e.g., Belford, 2017; Chai et al., 2012; Mahmood, 2014), which to a great extent is determined by the macro and micro political developments of the nation as has thus far been highlighted in the present chapter. In other words, the societies within which international students sojourn in to are shaped by the political developments occurring within the region, and to a great extent, determine and represent the socio-cultural standing of the host environment.

Particularly problematic developments, where international student wellbeing is concerned, are those political developments which promote ethnocentrism amongst locals, and intolerance towards minorities and outgroups. For example, movements such as the *Make America Great Again* (MAGA) movement (i.e., Azevedo, Jost, & Rothmund, 2017; Huber, 2016), and social attitudes which facilitated support for *Brexit* (i.e., Bhui, 2016; Heald et al., 2018), are rooted in ideologies which strive for homogeneous societies leaving little room for diversity and multiculturalism. For international students dependent on positive integration within host environments, such political developments serve to cultivate a tense and psychologically stressful atmosphere. For example, a recent report contributed by Heald, Vida, and Bhugra (2018) makes a case for the possible negative mental health effects of the Brexit referendum on minority ethnic groups (including any non-UK citizens). In particular, Heald and colleagues (2018) argue, ‘since the EU referendum… within certain sections of society, overt racial abuse is sadly now a cultural norm’ (p.110). Though this report does not explicitly refer to the mental health implication for international students, individuals in this cohort mostly constitute as part of an ethnic minority, or at the very least, are considered foreigners during their

studies abroad. It is thus, once again, worthy to note the extent to which macro-level politics can have micro-level effects on international student wellbeing by influencing societal attitudes.

Relationships between national representatives also play a significant role in international student experiences. Similar to the events which preceded the previously explored crash of the Turkish lira in July of 2018, a recent political dispute between Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the Saudi Arabian government has resulted in a Saudi 'recall' of over 12,000 international students pursuing education in Canada (Baker, 2018; Canadian Press, 2018; Perrigo, 2018). Further, according to an article by the Canadian Press (2018), 'Riyadh will stop training, scholarship and fellowship programs in Canada', a development which will affect an additional 3,000 students to the already affected 12,000 attending university in Canada. Turkish international students experienced a similar fate following the attempted military coup in 2016, when the Turkish government began 'purging' academics from their responsibilities and cutting funding to programs (Sezer, 2016; Yeung, 2016). In this way, the fragility of the international student 'economy' becomes increasingly more evident during times of macro-political strife, and can cause a significant level of disorder and concern for major destinations whose institutions and greater economy rely increasingly more on inward international student mobility. However, of even greater concern is the wellbeing of the international students who are 'caught in the crossfires' of international disputes between home and host. Not only is this cohort already susceptible to increased levels of stress, and therefore poorer mental-health when compared to their local peers, but the mechanisms by which this stress is facilitated is further perpetuated by such political developments, as they often present more barriers (e.g., financial, legal, social), and create a detriment of support from home-domains (i.e., funding bodies, governmental grants and scholarships, etc.).

Conclusion

Overall, political developments play a central role in shaping international education experiences. Disputes between international actors, the election of controversial leadership, and the implementation of seemingly ethnocentric or intolerant national policies, are all mechanisms by which macro-level developments locally influence international student experiences and wellbeing. Great consideration is needed when assessing the extent to which international students of regions experiencing political conflict internalize the features of these developments, and in addressing the wellbeing needs of this cohort in general. This chapter has made the case that major political shifts, especially those which promote the concepts of ethnocentrism and discrimination of minorities, directly shape the micro-social landscape of host-society. Future research would do well to continue investigating the dynamics of these experiences and quantifying the extent to which political developments have a direct impact on international student experiences. In this way, the research conducted on peripherally related themes hereby discussed may be linked together to develop a clearer conceptualization of what international students *truly* experience, specifically in times of political significance in home, host, or both.

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